

1. Project Design

This project is the construction of a major exhibit and the creation of associated educational programs; the topic of the planned exhibit and programs will be growing up during the early years of the atomic era. The exhibit *The Life Atomic: Growing up in the Shadow of the A-Bomb* is intended to provide a comparison of the threats to national and global security half a century ago with those of today.

The planned exhibit will consist of panels with images and text, cased objects either drawn from the Museum's collections or borrowed from local citizens or other area museums, and a re-creation of a circa 1962 family fallout shelter. The panels and the props and teaching collection objects used in the fallout shelter will become the core of a traveling exhibition that will be loaned to other museums.

As we pass the mid-point of the first decade of the twenty-first century, American citizens are threatened with the possibility of sudden, violent death at the hands of fanatical foreign terrorists who are willing to commit suicide in order to kill or injure as many people as possible. The horrific attacks of September 11, 2001 shook our nation as nothing since the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor sixty years earlier. But fifty years ago during the height of the Cold War Americans lived under another kind of threat: global thermo-nuclear war.

The two major super powers, the United States and Soviet Union, engaged in a dangerous arms race that produced bombs of increasing destructive power. Military personnel and unwitting citizens were exposed to the atomic fallout during the years of above ground nuclear testing. The men and women who had helped to give birth to these weapons, the atomic scientists, became the loudest voices against their proliferation.

In an effort to protect American citizens from nuclear attack, most cities established fallout shelters to which people could go in the event of an attack. Citizens also were provided with instructions on how to prepare fallout shelters in their homes and were given lists of the supplies needed to stock them. In the schools, students were taught the "Duck and Cover" drill in which they crawled under their desks and covered their heads

with their arms in what would have been a futile defense against the effects of an atomic blast.

Although there were no targets for direct nuclear attack near Rogers, Arkansas, prevailing winds from a significant number of targets in Oklahoma and eastern Kansas were likely to carry fallout over much of Northwest Arkansas. In December of 1962 Rogers designated two downtown buildings as community fallout shelters. The unique geology of Northwest Arkansas also provided alternatives to traditional basement fallout shelters. The profusion of limestone caves in the region led planners to designate several of these dank caverns as shelters.

The new technology of "radiation bombs" also spawned a wide variety of popular culture products including movies, home fashion, toys and games, and comic books. Films such as "The Amazing Colossal Man" and toys such as the "Junior A-Bomb" played to both our fear and our naiveté about the extent of the danger posed by nuclear weapons.

Through maps, photographs, film clips, informational pamphlets, objects, and personal accounts, the exhibit will examine this aspect of American history. The exhibit will explore the era during which the post World War II Baby Boomers grew up in an age of another kind of "boomer" altogether.

The Life Atomic: Growing up in the Shadow of the A-Bomb will provide a vehicle for discussion between those who grew up during the early atomic era and a new generation facing different, but very real threats in their day-to-day lives. Boomers and young people of today will find common ground in thinking about those threats and about the pervasive role pop culture has played in both reflecting and shaping attitudes for both generations.

Before drafting text or designing panels, the Museum will apply front end evaluation. We will use our advisory council composed of target audience members to gather information on the knowledge and attitudes of the general public about the exhibit topic. From testing concepts with the advisory council, Museum staff will judge which

subtopics are of most interest and which program ideas are most worthy of pursuing.

For the general public we are considering as programs an A-bomb monster movie fest followed by a discussion or a showing of the documentary *The Atomic Café* followed by a panel featuring faculty from the University of Arkansas and/or Northwest Arkansas Community College.

The Museum also will offer a program to American History students from the junior high schools in the Rogers district. (In our community American History is taught at the 8th and 9th grade levels.)

This program will be developed with input from the teachers of that course. The opportunity to arrange for students to visit the exhibition as a class or individually for class credit also will be offered to World History, government, and Advanced Placement U.S. History teachers at the high schools.

The teachers have been approached about bringing their students to the planned exhibit and associated program, and are very excited about the prospect. We plan to ask the teachers to help us evaluate the success of the exhibit and program by comparing students' knowledge and attitudes as revealed during class discussions before and after the Museum visit.

As the exhibit is developed, we will test panel design concepts and exhibit text with members of the advisory council as well as members of our Friends Board and volunteer corps. This will allow for adjustments in panel design and exhibit text before the exhibit goes into final production.

We have two major goals for our visitors: that they leave with greater knowledge of the extent to which the A-bomb colored all aspects of life in the 1950s

2. Grant Program Goals

Supporting Lifelong Learning

As Benton County's premier history museum, the Rogers Historical Museum has as part of its mission providing learning opportunities for all ages through enjoyable and enriching experiences that encourage lifelong learning.

The Life Atomic is intended as a vehicle for inter-generational discussion about the threats that faced

and 1960s, including popular culture; and that they take away from the exhibit an appreciation of the parallels and differences between the threats of the early atomic age and threats we face today. We want the exhibit to both inform and stimulate thought and discussion.

To evaluate the success of the exhibit in meeting our goals for visitors we will: provide a formal evaluation form for visitors to fill out; observe the amount of time spent by visitors in the various topic areas of the exhibit; and interact informally with visitors before and after they view the exhibit.

The Museum also has certain internal goals for this exhibition: to increase the number of new visitors, especially from among the Baby Boom generation and among newcomers to Rogers; to increase volunteerism; and to build on the previous success of the traveling exhibition program with a successful new exhibit. To date over 225,000 people in over two dozen states have viewed the Museum's other loan exhibitions. We hope this exhibit will be equally successful, and, because it deals with a more contemporary subject, will attract some new venues.

To gauge the success of the exhibit in meeting these internal goals we will: compare visitation during the exhibit with similar periods during previous years; ask visitors why they came to the Museum so we can track the impact of the exhibit on visitation; track long-term to see if visitors return, join our Friends group, etc.; track the success of the training session for volunteers in attracting participants and engaging them as volunteers for this and future projects; and compare interest in and evaluations of the traveling exhibit with interest in and evaluations of our previous traveling exhibitions.

Americans in the early atomic age and the threats that face our nation today. As part of this comparison, the exhibit will highlight the effects of these threats on popular culture then and now. Through including this more light-hearted aspect of the topic, the exhibit will encourage a sense of nostalgia that can be shared by older generations with younger ones.

It is somewhat ironic that older Americans might look back fondly on the Cold War years when the former Soviet Union kept much of the world in check and the fear of MAD [Mutually Assured Destruction] kept the nuclear threat in check. But those years were the childhood years of the Baby Boom generation, and as such those years hold the usual nostalgic associations of youth. *The Life Atomic: Growing up in the Shadow of the A-Bomb* will provide a vehicle for those who grew up during this period to discuss everything from movies and toys to global threats with a younger generation.

The Life Atomic: Growing up in the Shadow of the A-Bomb also is intended to provide a new kind of exhibition with appeal to a much broader audience. Visitor surveys and focus groups indicate that with the growing influx of newcomers to the area, comes a need to have exhibits that will attract those not necessarily interested in local history. Once in the Museum for the special exhibits, it is hoped that these newcomers attracted by the interconnection of area history with a larger national history also will discover that the local history is, in and of itself interesting, and will become repeat visitors.

To tie into the interests of this potential audience, the planned exhibit will put local history in the context of the larger global issues of the day. The advent of long-range bombers and intercontinental ballistic missiles made not only the nation, but the world, a much smaller place and the communities of Northwest Arkansas were not immune to the effects of these global issues.

3. How the Project Fits into Strategic Plan and Mission

The mission of the Museum calls for us to educate the public about the history of Rogers and the surrounding area of Northwest Arkansas. The story of growing up in our community during the early years of the atomic age will certainly play a major role in the planned exhibition. But the Museum's mission also refers to the importance of documenting the "connections between our past and the present and between our area and the nation."

This will be one of the strengths of this exhibit, which will place events in our area within the national context. The exhibit and associated programming also will encourage visitors to think about the parallels between growing up under the

The planned exhibit also will provide other museums with a vehicle to support lifelong learning in their own communities. After premiering at the Rogers Historical Museum, *The Life Atomic* will become a traveling exhibition. The Rogers Historical Museum already has a very active and popular traveling exhibits program. The Museum's panelized exhibitions are fairly compact and are ideal for smaller museums and museums with a limited changing exhibits space. The RHM traveling exhibits are also very economical and thus attractive for museums with small budgets.

Currently there are three traveling exhibitions in circulation on the topics of weddings in America, American foodways, and sports, games, and other play in the past. There is a need to retire at least one of them in the next few years due to wear and tear and waning interest. We consider *The Life Atomic: Growing up in the Shadow of the A-Bomb* to be an ideal candidate for this program.

What will be different about *The Life Atomic: Growing up in the Shadow of the A-Bomb* is that it will be larger than previous traveling exhibits, will include more teaching collection objects, will come with a pre-formatted blank panel template for the borrowing institution to create a local atomic history panel, and will include the plans and materials list for construction of a re-creation of a circa 1962 family fallout shelter. This exhibit will also deal with a more contemporary topic than previous exhibits, which focused on the late 1800s through the mid 1900s.

threat of nuclear attack and growing up today surrounded by threats ranging from terrorists with dirty bombs to a possible bird flu pandemic.

Finally, the Museum's mission calls for us to provide "enriching and enjoyable experiences for all." From its founding in 1975 until the 1990s, most of the Museum's exhibits focused on the late 1800s and the early 1900s. In more recent years the Museum has expanded its offerings to include exhibits focusing on the 1930s and 1940s. While audiences of all ages have enjoyed and learned from these exhibits, they often have been most enjoyable to those who remembered the eras in question. Now the Museum would like to offer that same

enjoyment to the nation's largest age cohort, the Baby Boomers.

It may seem peculiar to speak of a generation being nostalgic about the era of "mutually assured destruction." But, while the planned exhibit certainly will not shortchange the serious aspects of the topic, it also will explore the impact of the atom bomb on popular culture. And for those of us who grew up in the 1950s, atomic glow rings and movies about gigantic insects spawned by A-bomb tests are indeed fondly remembered parts of childhood. This exhibit might even offer an experience that middle-aged parents and their teen offspring can enjoy together, since many teens and young adults are fascinated by the "retro" fashions and popular culture of the 1950s and 1960s.

The planned project also fits well with the Museum's strategic plan. One of the primary goals of the plan is to build visitation, membership, and volunteer support. One action step for that goal is to develop 1950s-1970s themed exhibits in order to attract not only Baby Boomers but also young adults interested in the pop culture of that era. Since the Baby Boomers and their Echo Boomer children (many of whom are teens or young adults) together make up over half of Rogers' population, appealing to these audiences is vital to building visitation and support.

The planned exhibit also is designed to satisfy the interests of newcomers as revealed through the focus groups held as part of the Museum's long range planning process. In those focus groups, participants expressed a desire to see exhibits that explore area history within a broader national

context. Such exhibits would be equally interesting and relevant to long-time residents and newcomers alike. Attracting newcomers to Rogers will be vital to building visitation and support, since 20% of the current population of Rogers moved into the community within the past six years.

Another action step for that same goal is to enhance volunteer training and increase the number and variety of short-term volunteer opportunities. In preparation for exhibit construction the Museum will hold a training session to teach potential volunteers how to create "concrete blocks" and other needed props for the bomb shelter portion of the exhibition. These volunteers will then have the opportunity to help with the construction of the exhibit and will form the nucleus of a corps of volunteers available to help with similar projects in the future.

Yet another goal of the plan is to increase the visibility and enhance the image of the Museum in the community. One of the action steps for this goal is to continue the Museum's traveling exhibit program (a source of both prestige and income for the Museum) by adding a new exhibit to replace "Let's Play" when it is retired in 2008. "The Life Atomic" will be designed to serve as that new traveling exhibition.

Of all of the action steps in our strategic plan, developing new exhibits is among the most expensive. Many action steps can be accomplished at little cost to the Museum beyond staff time. It was for this reason that we targeted this particular project for an IMLS MFA grant application.

4. Strategic Plan: Process and Financial Resources

At the heart of the Museum's current strategic plan is increasing our service to the community while at the same time preparing for an anticipated expansion of the facility not long after 2010. Rogers has doubled in size over the past two decades; many of the newcomers have relocated from larger cities and their expectations for museum services go beyond what the Museum can offer in its current space – more interactive and hands-on activities and larger traveling loan exhibitions, for example. Unlike the retirees who fueled area population growth in the past, these new arrivals are

in their prime working years, and many have elementary- or middle-school-age children at home.

The City of Rogers (of which the Museum is a department) recognizes the need for expansion and in 2006 the City provided the Museum with the resources to fund the purchase of needed property. At the suggestion of the Mayor, the Council voted to have the proceeds of the sale of a no-longer-needed City building go into the Museum's endowment fund. With the sale completed and property purchased, the Museum now looks forward to securing a place in the next City bond issue. So

we must simultaneously strive to better serve the community using the resources currently available, while at the same time laying a solid internal and external groundwork for a successful expansion.

Development of the current strategic plan began in the summer of 2004 with a series of meetings involving Museum staff. At the first meeting we analyzed our current programs and services and decided which current offerings to target for expansion, which to maintain at the current level, which to decrease, and which to eliminate.

The next step in the planning process was to analyze our stakeholders, including teachers, families with young children, the leadership of the City of Rogers, and granting agencies. For each group of stakeholders we established the criteria each used to assess our performance, our sense of how each viewed the Museum, how each influences the Museum, what the Museum needs from each group, and how important we judged each group to be to the future of the Museum.

Next, using the tools and techniques provided by the book *New Visions: Tools for Changes in Museums*, the Museum's assistant director led the staff through an all-day planning session. We began by breaking into three groups; each group described its vision for an ideal future for the Museum and developed a metaphor for that ideal future. After a break we evaluated all aspects of Museum operations, ranging from use of collections to commitment to diversity.

Next the Museum Commission was led through the same visioning and evaluation exercises that the staff had earlier completed. The results of these sessions were pulled together with the results of

earlier planning meetings and were used to develop a summary of strategic plan priorities. Further meetings began the process of establishing actual goals and action steps, assigning responsibility for those action steps, and establishing a timeline for completion of same. As the planning progressed, the governing board of the Friends of the Museum was also brought into the process.

To gather public opinion to apply toward the planning process, the Museum contracted with Randi Korn and Associates to conduct two focus and two discussion groups with three potential Museum audiences: newcomers to the community with elementary- or middle-school-aged children; Hispanics; and members of the business community. From these frank discussions came additional ideas for goals and action steps to be incorporated into the plan.

This audience research project was funded through the Museum's endowment fund at a cost of \$21,481, a sizeable commitment of financial resources toward the planning process. The project is proving an invaluable help in understanding the needs and desires of three important segments of the community. Responding to those needs and desires will be essential to a successful financial future for an institution belonging to and supported by the citizens and taxpayers of Rogers.

Changes in senior staff in 2005 slowed the completion of the finalized plan. But the basic framework was in place to guide the plan of work for 2006. The Museum Commission adopted the final 2006-2009 strategic plan at its August 2006 meeting. By then many of the action steps for 2006 already were completed or well under way.

5. Appropriateness of Project for Institution, Audience

The target audiences for this exhibit are residents of Rogers who are: Baby Boomers; older teens and young adults; relative newcomers to the area; and students in the junior high and high schools.

Rogers is one of five cities making up a metropolitan area that covers two counties in extreme northwestern Arkansas. According to the special census conducted earlier this year, Rogers itself now has a population of nearly 50,000 residents. At the heart of one of the fastest

growing metro areas in the nation, Rogers has doubled in size over the past two decades and has added about 10,000 people to its population since the 2000 census. Thus about half of the local population are relative newcomers to the area, and one quarter have lived in the area for six years or less.

About 40% of the population of Rogers falls within the usual definition of the Baby Boomer demographic. An additional 14% are older teens

and young adults. Approximately 1,200 students will be enrolled in American history in the Rogers public schools in 2008.

From the focus groups held as part of our long range planning process we know that newcomers to the area are looking for exhibits that put local history into a broader context; not surprisingly they find such exhibits to be more relevant and interesting. This exhibit will meet that need for a broader context.

There is plenty of research to suggest that the Baby Boom generation responds well to themes and objects from the 1950s and 1960s. And of course anyone who watches Home and Garden television with any regularity is aware of the interest of older teens and young adults in the fashions, home styles, and pop culture of the mid 20th century.

Based upon their own personal experiences and interests, Museum staff feel strongly that the planned exhibit has the potential to attract both demographics. Half of the staff are themselves Boomers, while three staff members are in their mid twenties. The staff also includes three newcomers to Northwest Arkansas. So in this case, it turns out

that we ourselves actually are representatives of three of our target audiences.

The Museum investigated the interest of teachers in bringing their students to this exhibit and an associated program by contacting all of the junior high U.S. History teachers via email. The response was universally positive.

The exhibit will be promoted through: posters and flyers placed in restaurants and other places of business; the Museum newsletter; paid advertisements in regional magazines and newspapers; calendars of events in publications such as *Active Years* (which targets older adults); and direct mail and email to high school and junior high school teachers.

As for the traveling version of the exhibit, the Museum has a proven track record in marketing such small loan exhibitions to other museums. The target market is small-to-medium sized history museums. The traveling exhibit will be marketed by direct mail and email to borrowers of previous RHM loan exhibits, by notices on museum-related list serves, and by notices sent to state and regional museum associations.

6. Project Resources: Time and Budget

Most members of the relatively small staff of the Rogers Historical Museum typically have some role in exhibitions. Senior administrators, curatorial, and education staff will all have roles in this project. The exhibition will be researched, designed, installed and evaluated over a two-year period beginning in the spring of 2007.

Research for the project will be the most time consuming part of the project and will continue through final proofing of the exhibition script. Writing the exhibition script will be the primary responsibility of the Assistant Director. Preliminary drafting of the exhibit text will begin in mid 2007 and will take place concurrently with the research. Final research and drafting of the exhibit text will begin in the fall of 2007.

Twelve panels will be produced for this project. In December 2007 the panel design will be finalized and the panels will be completed, proofed, and

corrected. The panels then will be sent out to be printed, mounted, and laminated. Meanwhile progress will continue on the other exhibit components and on the production of an exhibit brochure and poster. When the printed panels return they will be framed out.

Much of the construction of the sets for this exhibit will be done by volunteers under the direction of Museum staff. These volunteers will have been recruited by the Museum staff and trained in museum exhibit construction by a museum exhibition consultant. It is expected that actual construction will take eight weeks. Installation is expected to take approximately eight days.

After the exhibit opens at the Rogers Historical Museum, crates for the traveling portions of the exhibit will be built by an experienced finish carpenter. Museum staff will produce an exhibit guide for borrowing institutions; the guide will

include instructions for installation, suggested educational programs to accompany the exhibit, and a bibliography on the topic.

The blank panel template, a press kit, and the plans and materials for the fallout shelter also will be produced by Museum staff during this time. This aspect of the project will take approximately four weeks to complete. Marketing of the traveling version of the exhibit will have begun by the fall of 2006 at the latest, as most museum plan to borrow exhibitions well in advance of the loan period.

Marketing will continue into 2008. The first two-year booking period will be finalized and arrangements made to ship to the first venue before

the exhibit closes at the Rogers Historical Museum. The last step will be evaluating the success of the exhibit and programs in meeting the stated goals.

This project has already been incorporated into the Museum's plan of work for 2006-2008, and staff members' other responsibilities have been adjusted to allow the time needed to complete this project. The Museum's budget requests for 2005, 2006, and 2007 all have been fully funded by the City of Rogers, which thanks to sales tax growth is in an enviable financial situation. We have good reason to expect that any O & M budgetary needs related to this project will similarly be funded. Staff involved in the project are in permanent full-time positions.

7. Project Resources: Personnel and Technology

The project team will include the following personnel. Director Dr. Gaye Bland will have general project oversight and editorial control of content and scripts. She also will be responsible for publicity and for evaluation. She has twenty-two years of experience in the museum field, eleven of those years as Director of the Rogers Historical Museum.

Assistant Director David Beard has eight years of experience in the museum field, primarily in curatorial and exhibitions work, preceded by fifteen years as a professional archaeologist and material culture specialist. He has served as the principle exhibition developer and script writer for several major exhibitions. The project was initially proposed by him and he has researched the resources and identified objects that need to be acquired by the Museum for the exhibit. He will research the topic, develop the story line, and write the exhibit text. He also will locate images for use on the panels and oversee the volunteer training and the exhibit design, construction, and installation.

Curator of Collections Sarah Price has six years of professional museum experience. She will be responsible for researching the RHM collections for pertinent content, arranging loans from other institutions and individuals, assuring timely return of those objects, and insuring proper environmental conditions exist for exhibited materials.

Curator of Education Janet Hargus has six years of museum experience. She will be responsible for developing and implementing programs and tours for junior high and high school aged students. The programming will meet curriculum goals in world history, American history, and social studies.

Exhibits consultant Curtis Morris has worked at the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History since 1998; he is currently the exhibit designer. He will teach volunteers basic museum exhibition techniques. The latter program will provide the Museum with a core group of volunteers who can assist in the design, fabrication, and installation of Museum exhibitions. This meets one of the Museum's goals, creating more short-term volunteer opportunities.

This project is the major Museum-produced exhibit for 2008 and is a scheduled part of the Museum's plan of work for 2006-2008. Museum staff will be able to devote adequate time to the project while at the same time accomplishing their other duties.

The Museum recently purchased a piece of property for future expansion which includes a heated, cooled, concrete-block shop building. This structure will be set up as an exhibit shop to be used in the construction of this exhibit. No new technology purchases will be needed, but since the Museum has not previously had an exhibit construction shop, equipment purchases are included in the project.

BUDGET FORM: Section B, Summary Budget

	\$ IMLS	\$ Cost Share	\$ TOTAL COSTS
1. Salaries and Wages		\$17,087.00	\$17,087.00
2. Fringe Benefits		\$6,152.00	\$6,152.00
3. Consultant Fees	\$400.00		\$400.00
4. Travel			
5. Supplies and Materials	\$5,410.00		\$5,410.00
6. Services	\$6,499.00		\$6,499.00
7. Student Support			
8. Other Costs	\$3,498.00		\$3,498.00
TOTAL DIRECT COSTS (1-8)			
9. Indirect Costs	\$2,371.00	\$3,486.00	\$5,857.00
TOTAL COSTS (Direct and Indirect)	\$18,178.00	\$26,725.00	\$44,903.00

Project Funding for the Entire Grant Period

1. Grant Funds Requested from IMLS	\$18,178.00
2. Cost Sharing:	
a. Applicant's Contribution	\$26,725.00
b. Kind Contribution	
c. Other Federal Agencies*	
d. TOTAL COST SHARING	\$26,725.00
3. TOTAL PROJECT FUNDING (1+2d)	\$44,903.00
Percentage of total project costs requested from IMLS	41 %

*If funding has been requested from another federal agency, indicate the agency's name:

SCHEDULE OF COMPLETION

2007

